

**Pictorial
Souvenirs**



**The
Alaska Highway**

Calgary

[1943]

15 photos

2 p. text

A Modern Miracle

THE ALASKA ALL-WEATHER HIGHWAY in one short season was ready for year-round transportation, and with the exception of a few permanent bridges, which are to be built in 1944, was completed on November 1st, 1943.

The area, under the jurisdiction of Brigadier General L. D. Wornham, Commanding General of the Northwest Service Command, is comparable to that of Europe. The problems of supply, transportation and administration, are similar to those of a military campaign.

A life line to the Aleutians, along which supplies to the Allies may be transported the year around, it is also a symbol of friendship between nations unparalleled in history. By mutual agreement between Canada and the United States, the road that lies within Canada and which was built and paid for by the United States Government, will be handed over to Canada at the conclusion of the war.

With the exception of air-lines and terminals at Dawson Creek and Fairbanks, both served by railroad, the only access point to the entire route was Whitehorse, which was connected with tidewater at Skagway, Alaska, and by the White Pass & Yukon narrow-gauge railroad. Whitehorse is a small town where some of the cabins built by prospectors of the gold rush days of '98 were put to use again.

All construction in the Sub-Arctic must take into consideration the tremendous problems of supply, transportation, and the short construction season. Added to this, were the problems of supply, and operation of equipment, during what has been termed by trappers and prospectors as the worst winter in fifty years, the temperature in some places dropping to 72 degrees below zero.

Snow did not present a problem as it never exceeded three feet in depth, but icing conditions proved very troublesome. Men had to be especially well clothed and quarters had to be built to withstand the Arctic weather and even then the walls were often covered with frost an inch thick. Bitter cold broke down machinery and presented a continual problem of keeping the engines warm enough to function properly, if at all. Nature plays queer tricks in the North country. Springs which flow or "bleed" all winter long often built great mounds of mushroom ice across the road. Streams and rivers that freeze from the bottom, caused the level of the stream beds to rise, overflow and form new channels.

The spring thaw made a section of the Highway which had not been ballasted, an impossible bog. Floods hampered the work in the summer of 1943. At one place, after the spring flood damage had been repaired, and the old-timers swore that the rains were

over, a temporary bridge had to be replaced seven times in ten days—and this was in August. Most of the rivers of the north are glacial in origin and carry an enormous amount of eroded material. These river beds filled with debris overflow in the summer and meander all over the valleys. An instance is recorded where a stream changed its channel four times in half an hour during a freshet, and the level of the valley as a whole was raised five feet by the deposit of gravel and boulders.

Despite these difficulties, during the peak of 1943 there were 7,000 pieces of rolling equipment in use on the project and 17,000 men and women working for 81 contractors. Scores of bridges were built, ranging from natural timber spans to the giant Peace River and Lower Liard River steel suspension bridges.

Now, the length of the Highway is divided into thirty-two sections, within each of which is located one of the more permanent maintenance camps. The function of these camps is to provide bases from which routine patrols can operate. There are eight areas established along the Highway and its feeder roads as well; each area with an especially equipped force with all the machines and tools necessary to take care of any emergency. One of these "feeder roads" is the 140-mile Haines Road, which runs from Haines, Alaska, at the head of the Lynn Canal, to join with the Alaska Highway about 100 miles north of Whitehorse and built to carry additional material into the northern half of the Alaska Highway area, if the need were apparent. This road generally follows the old Jack Dalton trail, over which Dalton drove cattle during the Klondike Gold Rush to sell to the starving miners at Dawson City.

This 1,523-mile route follows the "Pioneer" Road which was pushed through from Dawson Creek to Fairbanks by November 20th, 1942. In a little more than a year and a half, one of the greatest construction projects ever undertaken had been accomplished, the story of which, one day, will be a saga of the great Northland.

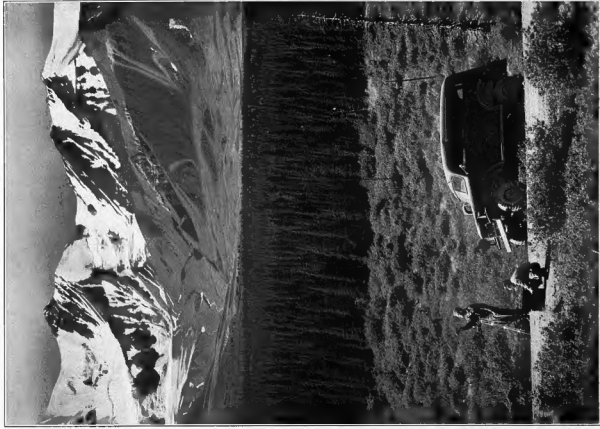
Beginning at Dawson Creek, B.C., 400 miles northwest of Edmonton, across magnificent mountain ranges and through densely wooded country, the Highway roughly follows this route: Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, through Lower Post on the British Columbia-Yukon border, to Watson Lake, from there on to Teslin and Whitehorse, the gold rush town, past Champagne and beautiful Kluane Lake which in the summer is a favorite subject for amateur photographers in the army, through Burwash Landing, across the Alaska border to Tanana Crossing and follows the Tanana River to Big Delta, Richardson and Fairbanks.

And so, war opened to the world a hitherto unknown land of great resources and a wonderland of scenic beauty and romance, a heaven for tourists, scenic lovers, holiday sportsmen and explorers. A land rich in timber, oil and minerals, the greatest fur-bearing animal region in Canada, and the world's greatest fishing grounds.

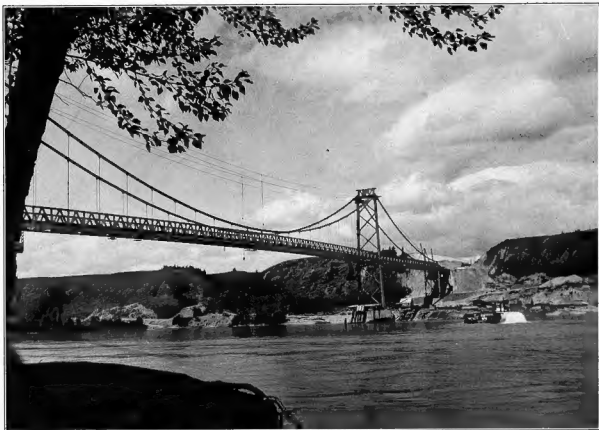
Across snow-tipped mountains, rushing rivers, around glittering lakes, through forests of pine and spruce trees, revealing a land of indescribable beauty, passes the winding road of the Alaska Highway.



Edmonton, Alberta, with Provincial Government Buildings in the background.



Photographer making record shots from Highway, against mountain scenery.



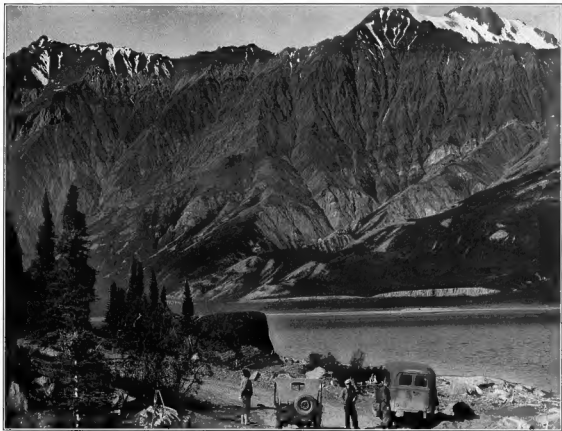
The great steel bridge spanning the Peace River on the Alaska Highway.



Pneumatic drilling device at work over a high piece of the Alcan Route in the Yukon.



Barge with construction equipment about to start the trip north.



A view of the Highway seen from the shoreline of a mountain lake, fringed with mighty peaks.



Aerial shots depicting country through which Alaska Highway passes.



A picturesque aerial shot of country through which the Highway passes.



View of Soldiers Summit, where opening ceremony of Alaska Highway took place.



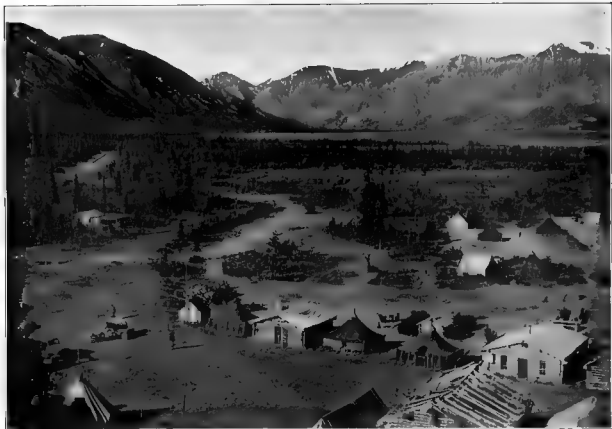
The Alaska Highway—"The Trail of 42



Road signs on the Alaskan Highway near Watson Lake.



A convoy of trucks comes over the Donjek River on the Alcan Highway.



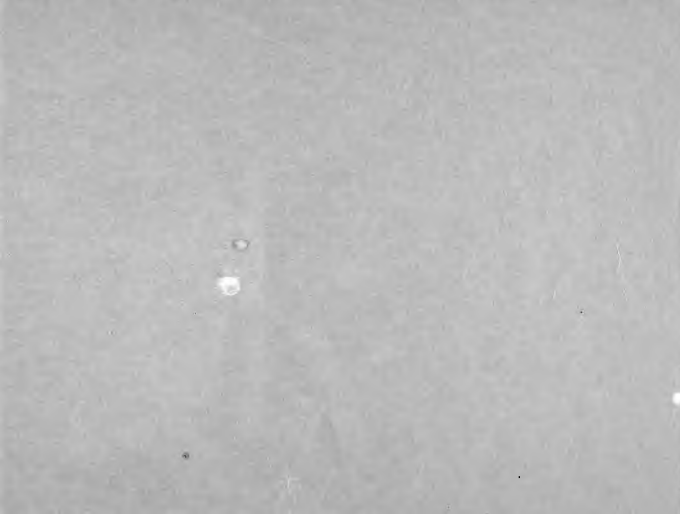
An old Indian village somewhat augmented by U.S. army tents.



Kluane Lake Camp, a mixture of tents, log cabins and clap-board barracks. This is a bitterly cold spot as the wind sweeps in off the lake.



Donjek River Basin, just off the Alcan Highway. This is one of the most beautiful spots on the road.



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